

"Many, many people will come to the wedding," exclaimed my hostess, beginning to prepare our luncheon. She took from under a deer-skin a wooden cup full of fish-fat, removed with her fingers the dead mosquitoes and dirt in it, took a bundle of yukala, and placed all on the flat wooden barrel which served as a table. The yukala was dipped in the fish-fat, and this was the usual dainty luncheon in the fishing season. Remembering that Russians were somewhat [42] fastidious, our hostess produced for our use a flat spoon made of choobukhorn, (1) which she carefully cleaned by licking it."

1. The choobuk is a very interesting animal, little known to zoology. It is found in the mountains of Tass-Khayata. It resembles a moufflon and is very timid. Its thick fluffy fur is of a bluish colour. The Lamouts make spoons of its flat twisted horns.

"The usual food of the great majority of Yakuts is the so-called 'tar' which is a mixture of meat, fish, various roots, grass, and pine-bark. This is put into skimmed milk mixed with water, to which is added a little flour, if such is to be had, and the whole is boiled into a kind of [91] porridge. The Yakuts drink a great deal of tea, and are very fond of strong spirits. The wealthy eat meat every day and a kind of thick pancake, made of water and barley-flour."

"Milk is in general request among them, whether from cows or mares; and when they are [302] in the neighbourhood of the Russians, and can get flour, they do so; but far away in the forests they make a sort of porridge or bread, not exactly of sawdust, but of the under bark of the spruce, fir, and larch, which they cut in small pieces, or pound in a mortar, mixing it with milk, or with dried fish, or boiling it with glutinous tops of the young sprouts. In spring, when the sap is rising, they gather their bark harvest. They make also fermented beverages of milk; and in the height of summer, when the mares foal, an orgie is held, at which the men drain enormous bowls of this intoxicating liquor; whilst the women, denied the privilege of intoxication, solace themselves by getting as near to it as they can by smoking tobacco. The distillation of sour milk is also practised, producing a coarse spirit known as arigui. They devour likewise enormous quantities of melted butter. This also can be prepared in such a way as to cause intoxication when taken in sufficient quantities."

"The principal food of the Okhotsk Yakuts is dried fish; the inland tribes eat horse-flesh with avidity: they prefer it to beef, and rarely kill oxen for food. One special dish of theirs is called tar: it is a mixture of meat, fish, various roots, grass and the under-bark of spruce, fir, or larch, pounded in a mortar; this is put into skimmed-milk mixed with water to which is added a little flour (when available), and the whole is boiled into a kind of porridge. They gather their bark harvest in spring, when the sap is rising. Their special intoxicant is kumis (fermented mare's milk); they also drink large bowls of melted butter. Another of their delicacies is jelly extracted from reindeer-horns and flavoured with pine-bark. They collect huge quantities of berries and cedar-cones for food. They are also great consumers of tea."

"Their food consists of sour cows' milk, mares' milk, of beef, and of horseflesh. They boil their meat, but never roast or bake it, and bread is unknown among them. Fat is their greatest delicacy, and they eat it in every possible shape; raw, melted, fresh, or spoiled. In general, indeed, they regard quantity more than quality in their food. They grate the inner bark of the larch, and sometimes of the fir, and mix it with fish, a little meal and milk, or, in preference, with fat, and make it into a sort of broth, which they consume in large quantities. They prepare from cows' milk what is called Jakutian butter, which is in reality more like cheese or curd, and has a sourish taste: it is not very rich, and is a very good article of food eaten alone."

38: Dobell--40-41
116, 234, 252, 262

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(1812-13) 1830

Yakut

"They make butter by melting sour cream over the fire; after it is melted, it is strained into birch vessels and suffered to cool: the milk that remains is suffered to sour; and this, boiled with rye-flour, and called in their language bordook, is a favorite food, and, I believe, a very wholesome one.

Another dish they are fond of is solimat; [41] this is rye-flour and butter boiled in a copper kettle until it begins to burn a little, when hot water and salt are added occasionally, until the whole is well boiled. The flour and water form a kind of pudding, and the greater part of the butter floats on the surface, which the Yakut delights to sip with his solimat."

"All the lakes and rivers abound with most excellent fish, and the poorer classes eat nothing else. My observations here have led me to doubt the brain-producing character of a fish diet, or else that the fish here are of the right sort for that purpose. I can, however, attest the excellent quality of the fish, especially raw and frozen. In that case the skin is stripped off and long slices cut longitudinally from the fish, and eaten with or without salt, as the taste or means of those who eat may dictate. When eaten thus it is called by the Russians 'struganina,' and by the Yakouts 'tung bullok.' When cooked it is boiled, fried, baked or made into pie or biscuit. Reindeer meat is also eaten by those who can afford it, unless rich enough to eat beef, which they prefer, though why I could never discover, for the meat of the reindeer is much more delicate and tender, and has a peculiarly delicious flavor, probably derived from the fragrant moss that constitutes its food. It is cheap enough to satisfy the most economical housekeeper, a fine fat buck, entire, costing at Nishne Kolym'sk only three roubles--that is, a dollar and a half--and at Sradnia five roubles. The meat of the reindeer is always excellent, while the beef is usually coarse grained and tough. At Nishne and Sradnia beef is more expensive than reindeer, at Werchojansk they cost about the same, while at Yakouts'k reindeer meat is the most expensive, and is only exceeded in price by the horse, which is a luxury only to be indulged in by the rich. It is a luxury, I believe, chiefly prized by the Yakouts, though I understand that it is served at the restaurants in Yakouts'k to those who desire it."

44: Gilder --327

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(1882) 1883

Yakut

116, 252

"During the afternoon of the next day a small boat came over with two Yakouts, who brought some tea, flour and the awful butter mixed with tallow which is made by the Yakout housewives. "

"The country here [RCH: between the Aldan River and Yakutsk] is more thickly peopled than further north, but the houses are of the same construction--logs notched into each other at the corners and a flat roof of logs closely laid and covered with a thick layer of turf. The whole outside of the structure is afterward smeared with manure. The rich Yakouts live just like the poor ones-- the same kind of houses, one little end reserved for the family, and the other filled with cows and calves. At the season I passed through this country these people live entirely upon milk, rich and poor, alike. The milk is boiled with the inner bark of the pine tree, pounded first to break the fibres. Sometimes this dish is improved with a gallon or two of minnows, caught in traps that are set for the purpose in every lake and stream. I have eaten of this dish with these people in the fashionable style--that is, each male is provided with a large wooden spoon, and the pot is set in the middle of the table, so that every one can fish for himself. When one is hungry it is a very palatable dish, but I cannot understand how great, strong men can be satisfied to subsist on milk when they have an abundance of cattle. Perhaps it is this milk diet that makes such cowards of these people."

" Their principal food, which they call bourdouk, gave me infinite repugnance. It is a kind of thick frumenty, made of rye meal and water, into which, after it is taken off the fire, they pour fish oil; the quantity they eat of it astonished and shocked me. I was told that in general they were not very great eaters; it was however added, that they now and then, as a treat, roast a horse, which is demolished in a few hours by a very small number of guests, and the intestines of the animal are by no means the least precious morsel. [270] Who would suppose that men of such voracious appetites, practice at other times a frugality that seems scarcely sufficient to support life, and frequently continue a number of days together without food?